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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 07 TEL AVIV 002079

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WHITE HOUSE FOR PRESS OFFICE, SIT ROOM  
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E.O. 12958: N/A  
TAGS: [IS KMDR MEDIA REACTION REPORT](#)  
SUBJECT: ISRAEL MEDIA REACTION

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SUBJECTS COVERED IN THIS REPORT:  
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[1](#)1. Mideast

[1](#)2. Iraq

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Key stories in the media:  
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Both Ha'aretz (Hebrew Ed.) and Maariv led with, and all media reported on the "Shi'ite Intifada" (Ha'aretz) in Iraq. All media also reported on the confrontation with U.S. troops in and around the Sunni city of Fallujah. Like other media, Ha'aretz reported that 130 Iraqi citizens and 20 coalition soldiers were killed over the past two days. Israel Radio cited President Bush's optimism regarding the stabilization of the situation in Iraq.

Gaza withdrawal plan:

-Israel Radio cited reports from Washington that the U.S. and Israel have agreed in principle on the components of PM Sharon's disengagement plan: Bush would support the plan as an interim step until the implementation of the road map. The radio quoted its sources in Washington as saying further that the agreement was reached last week at the talks between Sharon and the three U.S. envoys (Steve Hadley, Elliott Abrams and A/S William Burns), and that the points still in contention will be resolved before the Bush-Sharon meeting next Tuesday. The station also reported that Sharon has started a round of talks with his cabinet ministers to discuss his plan before his upcoming trip to the U.S. -- Monday at his farm, he met with Finance Minister Binyamin Netanyahu. Sharon will depart Israel next Monday.

-Yediot reported that "Disengagement is good for Israel" will be the slogan leading Sharon's campaign to persuade the Likud registered members to support him and his plan. The newspaper reported that his opponents in the Likud will launch a campaign that will hint that he initiated his plan because of the investigations he is going through.

-Arafat was quoted as saying in an interview with Yediot's Ronnie Shaked that Sharon must coordinate the withdrawal from Gaza with the PA. He was quoted as saying: "We have received promises from the Quartet and the Americans that the withdrawal will be part of the road map -- and I hope it indeed will be." Arafat reiterated that he is not afraid of Sharon's threats. (Maariv cited the Arab League's call on Israel Tuesday not to hurt Arafat.) Arafat condemned the killing of civilians. The full interview will be printed on Friday. Israel Radio quoted Palestinian FM Nabil Shaath as saying that the U.S. has promised economic assistance to the PA after Israel's pullout from Gaza. The radio quoted former Palestinian PM Abu Mazen as saying on Al Jazeera-TV that both Israel and the PA had failed him.

Israel Radio quoted Deputy State Department Spokesman

[1](#)J. Adam Ereli as saying Tuesday: "Far from being welcomed into any partnership or cooperation, Hamas should be ostracized and disempowered as an organization." According to the radio, Ereli was responding to an interview PA Chairman Yasser Arafat gave to the German weekly Focus, in which he hinted that he could include Hamas and all Palestinian factions in the PA. Several leading media reported that Monday the Palestinian daily Al-Ayyam noted Arafat's intention. Jerusalem Post reported that a source in Sharon's bureau dismissed the move as a desperate bid by Arafat to stay in power.

Jerusalem Post reported that a source in Sharon's bureau dismissed as "nonsense" a statement made by incoming Spanish FM Miguel Moratinos in an interview published Tuesday in the British daily Financial Times: "Al Qaida will not be defeated until there is a peaceful resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict."

Ha'aretz, Yediot and Jerusalem Post reported that Monday morning IDF troops killed three Palestinians near the central Gaza Strip. The media reported that the IDF found and destroyed an eight-meter smuggling tunnel at Rafah. This morning, Israel Radio reported that the IDF wounded two Palestinians in the Casbah of Nablus.

Several media reported that over the past few days the Ayoun River stopped flowing into Israel, possibly under orders from Lebanon. This morning, Israel Radio reported that the water was streaming again.

Leading media reported that Iran has pledged to speed up cooperation with the IAEA and to stop enriching uranium.

All media reported that a Montreal Jewish elementary school was firebombed Monday. The police allegedly found anti-Semitic notes at the spot, denouncing recent Israeli attacks against Palestinians, including the killing of Sheikh Ahmed Yassin. Monday, Ha'aretz devoted its entire Passover supplement to the rise of anti-Jewish and anti-Israeli activity in the world. The magazine describes the struggle between pro-Israeli and pro-Palestinian militants on U.S. campuses.

Ha'aretz cited the results of Tel Aviv University's Peace Index, conducted March 28-30:

-72.5 percent of Israelis believe that Palestinian leaders at the level of leadership of organizations such as Hamas should be assassinated in the framework of the long-term war on terror, while only 21 percent believe that such assassinations should be avoided because they damage Israel's international image and hurt its economic and tourism interests; 6.5 percent are undecided

--79 percent of Israelis says that they did not change their daily routine after Yassin's assassination; 20 percent say they changed it; 1 percent say that they do not know.

-68 percent of Israelis think that the 70 Palestinian public figures who called for avoiding revenge over Yassin's killing represent only a small, insignificant sector on the Palestinian side; a similar number assess that the Israelis who condemned the act in the press represent only a small, insignificant group; only 10 percent believe the call by the Palestinian intellectuals would have a moderating influence on the Palestinian public in general; only 14 percent believe the call by the Israeli intellectuals would have a moderating influence on the Israeli public in general. Only 4 percent believe the call to avoid revenge would moderate the reaction of Hamas, and just 12 percent believe the condemnation by Israeli public figures and intellectuals would moderate the Israeli government's policy of targeted killings.

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1. Mideast:  
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Summary:  
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Veteran op-ed writer and the late prime minister Yitzhak Rabin's assistant Eytan Haber opined in an editorial of mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot: "Those who know the Americans and are familiar with Israel's history with them, know that they will not agree with Sharon on less than a withdrawal to the 1967 borders, with slight revisions."

Senior columnist and chief defense commentator Zeev Schiff wrote in independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz: "Most critics don't believe Israel has a right to self-defense. Israel, therefore, should in most cases ignore the critics."

Arab affairs commentator Danny Rubinstein wrote in Ha'aretz: "The Israeli boycott of Arafat and the PA has opened the door to cooperation between Hamas and the Authority. The day when Hamas joins the PA, however, is still far off."

Former editor-in-chief Moshe Ishon wrote in nationalist, Orthodox Hatzofe: "The joint statement ... will only be a declarative one on the part of the

United States. On the other hand, Sharon will commit himself in a practical fashion to withdrawing from the Gaza Strip and some West Bank settlements within a year."

Block Quotes:

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I. "Baghdad"

Veteran op-ed writer and the late prime minister Yitzhak Rabin's assistant Eytan Haber opined in an editorial of mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot (April 7): "The situation [in Iraq] reminds the Israelis of the first euphoric days of Arik Sharon's Lebanon War in 1982, which ended in a whimper, after the thunder of exploding bombs. Some people here also remember the descent of the architects of the Lebanon War here from the political stage (and Sharon's late return). The chips that fly from the sawing of the Iraqi tree reach the Prime Minister's bureau in Jerusalem: the president of the U.S., on the eve of elections, needs a serious achievement. In his eyes, in the view from the Oval Office, he must not upset the Islamic countries too much. Therefore, there is a basis for the conjecture that there is no meaning or value to the leaks issuing from Jerusalem saying that Sharon's path, in his upcoming visit to the U.S., will be easy and comfortable. According to the whispers from Jerusalem, the Americans 'will give everything.' The frequent trips of Bureau Chief Dov Weisglass to the U.S. do not attest to a broad understanding with Washington. In order to agree, it is sufficient to meet once, but differences of opinion and disputes require many meetings. Therefore, those who know the Americans and are familiar with Israel's history with them, know that they will not agree with Sharon on less than a withdrawal to the 1967 borders, with slight revisions; they will remain silent as to the 'right of return'; and they are expected to reject further requests by Sharon. This is not the time in the eyes of Bush and his administration to exacerbate the quarrels with the Arab world. In the parlance of sports commentators, 'any other result (for Sharon's visit) will come as a great surprise.'"

II. "Israel Is Not Allowed to Defend Itself"

Senior columnist and chief defense commentator Zeev Schiff wrote in independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz (April 7): "'Pinpoint prevention' provoked a tsunami of complaints, as if this war wasn't a war in which one side, the Palestinian side, deliberately strikes at civilians -- on buses, in restaurants and malls -- filling the explosives belts with large amounts of nails to make sure as much damage as possible takes place. That is targeted killing of Israelis. But in the eyes of the critics, the pursuit of terrorists appeared to be a criminal act, not hostilities during warfare.... And there were complaints against the IDF's rules of engagement. What army in the world has better rules of engagement?.... All [armies] could learn from the IDF about how to comply with the orders.... Lift the blockades and checkpoints, shouted the critics. True, the checkpoints harass the innocent, but the critics did not take into account that the breaches through which the murderers come must be blocked.... The criticism is also fed from inside Israel.... Presumably if we were to defend ourselves in this war of terror by throwing rocks, the world would still complain. Most critics don't believe Israel has a right to self-defense. Israel, therefore, should in most cases ignore the critics. We should be the ones to criticize what is happening on our side and around us."

III. "Resistant Hamas Eyes Joint Leadership Role in Gaza"

Arab affairs commentator Danny Rubinstein wrote in Ha'aretz (April 7): "Hamas never wanted to join the Palestinian Authority because it was set up on the basis of the Oslo Accords, which it and the other opposition fiercely opposed.... Now, Hamas leaders are saying they want to setup a joint national leadership body in Gaza after the withdrawal. These declarations give the impression that Hamas is ready to recognize a joint leadership body that will constitute an alternative to the PA.... The key factor that explains the change in the Hamas position is the demise of the Oslo Accords. Moreover, there are no contacts between the PA and the Israeli government, and an Israeli

pullout from Gaza will be conducted unilaterally, without any coordination or consultation with the Authority. In other words, the Israeli boycott of Arafat and the PA has opened the door to cooperation between Hamas and the Authority. The day when Hamas joins the PA, however, is still far off. In his interview with [the German weekly] Focus, Arafat praised the moderation, in his words, of Sheikh Ahmed Yassin, as opposed to Abdel Aziz Rantisi, his successor in Gaza. Arafat's criticism of Rantisi will not help any partnership between them."

#### IV. "Washington Will Do What It Has Always Done"

Former editor-in-chief Moshe Ishon wrote in nationalist, Orthodox Hatzofe (April 7): "President Bush has rejected Sharon's requests regarding the indivisibility of Jerusalem; he has declined to publish a unequivocal announcement about the future of Jewish settlement in Judea and Samaria [the West Bank]; he has also declined to rule unambiguously against the return of 1948 refugees. The President has reiterated that those issues will finally be determined in a peace agreement between the sides. Thus, the joint statement that will be issued at the conclusion of Mr. Sharon's visit to the U.S. will only be a declarative one on the part of the United States. On the other hand, Sharon will commit himself in a practical fashion to withdrawing from the Gaza Strip and some West Bank settlements within a year, as part of this is implemented even before the U.S. elections. This would most likely be the first phase of the evacuation of some West Bank settlements."

#### ----- 12. Iraq: -----

##### Summary: -----

Foreign News Editor Arik Bachar wrote in popular, pluralist Maariv: "The U.S. Administration has less than one year to complete its Iraqi project decisively. This requires a significant boosting of the number of troops sent to Iraq, but that is an incommensurably worthwhile investment."

Conservative, independent Jerusalem Post editorialized: "Just because Iraq's nominal future leadership favors a course of moderation doesn't mean that's the course Iraq will take. Moderation is a virtue, but its defect is its reluctance to confront extremism with anything but moderation. In Iraq today, this will not do."

Nationalist, Orthodox Hatzofe editorialized: "The means Israel is using in the face of murderous Palestinian terrorism are much more moderate [than the ones employed by the Americans and the British in Iraq]."

##### Block Quotes: -----

#### 1I. "You Must Finish What You've Started"

Foreign News Editor Arik Bachar wrote in popular, pluralist Maariv (April 7): "Life on our planet is hard enough. Should the Americans leave Iraq and leave it as booty for extremists like Sadr, life will become unbearable for everybody -- from the New York yuppie to the last of the Indonesian villagers. Bush and his staff know this, but they might be ousted from the White House in half-a-year; a Democratic administration in the U.S. would find a way to leave Iraq as soon as possible. U.S. failure in Iraq would constitute a war call for generations of Islamic fanatics, would torment the lives of all of us [on earth]. The U.S. Administration has less than one year to complete its Iraqi project decisively. This requires a significant boosting of the number of troops sent to Iraq, but that is an incommensurably worthwhile investment. For every American soldier who is now staying home, America will have to send five soldiers in the future to eradicate the bad news that might come from Iraq."

#### II. "Gloves Off in Iraq"

Conservative, independent Jerusalem Post editorialized (April 7): "It is a testament to what the coalition has achieved that the principal Shi'ite cleric in Iraq, Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, has called on Sadr to 'stop resorting to violence' and to turn away from a 'course that could destroy the nation.' But just because Iraq's nominal future leadership favors a course of moderation doesn't mean that's the course Iraq will take. Moderation is a virtue, but its defect is its

reluctance to confront extremism with anything but moderation. In Iraq today, this will not do. It is not simply a matter of political or strategic necessity, but rather the moral obligation of the coalition, to ensure that the monopoly on the use of force rests firmly in the hands of legitimately constituted authority. Whatever price ordinary Iraqis will pay in the coming weeks to ensure that outcome will surely be a small one next to what they'll have to face at the hands of an emboldened Sadr, an emboldened Iran, and an emboldened Fallujah street. We trust Bremer and Co. know this, too."

### III. "American-British Experience"

Nationalist, Orthodox Hatzofe editorialized (April 7): "Let it be clear: the American-British struggle in Iraq is absolutely justified. But the most justified move at this time would be to place a mirror in front of the American-British troops in Iraq. The means Israel is using in the face of murderous Palestinian terrorism are much more moderate. Only last week did the Americans and the British scatter a demonstration in Iraq by shooting live fire into the crowd. For a moment we almost shouted: 'Mr. Blair, Mr. Bush, stop that cruelty!'"

LEBARON